THE NORTH-EASTERN COUNCIL (AMENDMENT) BILL, 1998

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: On this Bill, Shri Rishang Keishing had started the other day, he would continue now. We had allotted two hours for it, but I don't find many names in the list before me. I think we should pass this Bill today itself, because the North-Eastern region is very important region for us, and, therefore, we should pass this legislation, as soon as possible. I hope the House will cooperate.

The CPI(M) has given two names, but only one can speak in the time allotted to that party; two can't speak. Then, since there are only 26 minutes for 'others,' you should decide among yourself as to who would speak. Mr. Fali Nariman is here, Mr. Manoj Bhattacharya is here. Dr. Sarma comes from that region. Those concerned with it, like Mr. Swaraj Kaushal, who was there, may like to speak. I think, we should decide. Only those whose speeches would be helpful, as far as the development of the North-Eastern region is concerned, should participate in the discussion so that the discussion becomes more meaningful for the Government.

SHRI RISHANG KEISHING (Manipur): Madam, I will take only two-three minutes more to conclude my speech. The other day, I was stressing the great importance of the North-Eastern Council. Madam, as many as eight Chief Ministers of the 8 States, including some of the Members, meet, at least, once a year-maybe, twice also—to discuss the overall development of the entire region, which, presently, is beset with all kinds of troubles, backwardness and mounting unemployment problem of educated persons, insurgency, and all that.

So, I was stressing that the nation can't take the problem of the North-East lightly. We have to do everything possible to see that this area is expeditiously developed and brought on par with the rest of the country. It is in that context I am pleading that it should be made structurally strong. Earlier, the North-Eastern Council was, more or less, the Governor's Council. But that has been done away with, and, now, the Chief Ministers are there. There is a clause to nominate three Members, by the President. I insist that this nomination should be confined to only Members of Parliament. It will not weaken the organisation. On the other hand, it will strengthen the North-Eastern Council. It will be supportive to the Chief Minisiters, and there will be no problem. Since it is a non-political organisation, there will be no debates. It is there only for development matters. There will be no quarrel. Everybody knows that it is only for equal sharing of the funds, according to the needs of the region. That is why I insist that the Minister should consider inclusion of Members of Parliament in that. But, while doing that, the role of the Chief Minister should not be undermined.

Of course, you will have the support of suggestions of the Chief Ministers and the bureaucrats. But that is not enough. He should be supported by elected representatives, like Members of Parliament. That will make the North-Eastern Council more transparent and accountable. That is why I am insisting on it. The Bill as before us is silent about the chairmanship of the Council. In the past, the Governors used to do it. But all along we have been insisting that the Deputy Chairman of the Planning or the Home Minister should be the Chairman of the Council. But that was before the appointment of a separate Minister for the North-East, Now, today we have a separate Minister for North-East, I think the Chief Ministers are there as members and hopefully the Members of Parliament will also be there as members of the Council. It is but appropriate that the Minister in-charge of North-East be made the Chairman of this Council. There should be no nomination of bureaucrats. I think the Chief Ministers will not be willing to sit under a bureaucrat, may be a retired or serving. I think that will be improper. That is why I am suggesting this. Again, the third point is that the North-Eastern Council should never be made starving for finance. Today, whatever fund is available, we are trying to make the best use of the same. We are graceful for that. But the problems that we are facing that cannot be met with the present funds available to NEC. The major problems faced are with regard to communication and power. The entire area has to be brought on a par with the rest of the country. That is why I say that it should never be kept starving for funds. I once again appeal to the hon. Minister that these few points and suggestions that I have made, may kindly take into consideration. This is a unique organisation. It is only one of its kind in the country. Once the Chief Ministers gather, they will naturally not be confined to development matters alone. They will also be discussing other problems which this area is facing. So, this Council has to be guided by some Central Minister whoever is in-charge of the North-East or some other Cabinet Minister because then only will it be fruitful and it will be able to tackle the complex and ticklish problems successfully that they are facing today. With these few words, I support the Bill barring nomination part of it. I hope that will be rectified by the Minister. Thank you.

SHRI PRASANTA CHATTERJEE (West Bengal): Madam Deputy Chairperson, on behalf of our Party, the CPI(M), we support the North-Eastern Council (Amendment) Bill, 1998. It is a step in the right direction that the Chief Ministers of the States have been given almost absolute importance in this Bill. But only moving this Bill for the formation of a Council will not solve the serious problems of this Region. National unity and integrity are under a serious attack in the North-Eastern States for long many, many years. Immediately after the Independence, the extremist activities had become a

major law and order problem in the States of Manipur, Assam and Tripura in the eighties and nineties of the last century. Backwardness resulting in acute unemployment, landlessness, lack of development are the major causes for frustration of the younger generation and other sections of the educated people. Interested foreign agencies are also encouraging secessionist activities in the region. The Council should have to face all these problems and it should be given all assistance from the Union Government, including adequate funds for the all-round development. Speedy steps to improve the conditions of the people should be undertaken. Besides initiating political steps to deal with insurgency, modernisation of the State police force should also be worked out to face the challenges. We must remember that the States are backward. And there are many States like that of Tripura where there is even no railway line. There are a plenty of gas in Tripura. The Council will have to discuss why the Tribal people should not have the right in the forest. These are all important questions and the Union Government should extend all assistance to the Council.

Lastly, I would like to suggest that the hon. President's nominee in the Council should be selected from amongst the experts in planning affairs. Thank you. I conclude.

SHRI S. VIDUTHALAI VIRUMBI (Tamil Nadu): Madam Deputy Chairman, the Bill brought before us for consideration is The North-Eastern Council (Amendment) Bill, 1998. Here, I would like to make only two points.

[THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI SANGH PRIYA GAUTAM) in the Chair]

The first is that everybody knows that unemployment is the breeding ground for extremism. To see that unemployment is eradicated from the North-East, several programmes have been initiated. Sir, during the Ninth Plan period, the amount allocated for the North-Eastern Region is Rs. 24,678 crores. I would like to know from the hon. Minister how much amount has, actually, been spent of the allocated amount. I hope the hon. Minister is taking down the notes.

The second point is, the hon. Prime Minister has announced a package for the socio-economic development for the North-East. For this, the Government have allocated an amount of Rs. 13,388 crores. Out of this amount, I would like to know how much amount has, so far, been spent for the development of the North-Eastern Region. Sir, twenty-eight items were identified in that package. I would like to know how many items have so far been covered. This is the second point.

The third point is, when the original North-Eastern Council Bill was brought before the House, the Government wanted one particular thing. If you look at the Statement of Objects and Reasons, this will become clear. The Statement of

Objects and Reasons of the Bill says, 'The main features of the proposed amendments are as follows *i.e.*, the Governors, who are the Constitutional heads, shall seize to be the Members of the Council.' It is mentioned in the Statement of Objects and Reasons. Before that what the Government says is, 'to make the Council more effective this decision was taken.' Again, through the present amendment, you are including Governors in the Council! Earlier, you excluded the Governors for an effective administration. now, through this amendment, you want to include Governors for the same effective administration! What is the rationale behind this? There are autonomous districts in the State. (*Time-bell*) Sir, I would take only one more minute. It is a very important aspect. The hon. Minister will have to look into it. According to our Constitution, the funds are sent to the State Governments. They say—I do not know whether it is correct or not—that the State Government withholds the funds, allocated for the autonomous districts. The fund allocated for autonomous districts is released at the fag end of the financial year, that is, during the month of January or February.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI SANGH PRIYA GAUTAM): Kindly give suggestions.

SHRI S. VIDUTHALAI VIRUMBI: Okay, Sir. So, in March, the unspent money is taken back by the State Government. I would like to appeal to the hon. Minister to see that amount allocated for the autonomous districts is credited in such a way that it is non-lapsable, and it is not taken back by the State Government. This will improve relations between the autonomous districts and the State Government. Thereby, we would be able to maintain unity and integrity in the North-Eastern region. I expect a reply from the hon. Minister, in this regard. With these words, I conclude, Sir.

SHRI DRUPAD BORGOHAIN (Assam): Thank you, Mr. Vice-Chairman, Sir. As compared to other parts of the country, the North-Eastern region is very backward. So, it deserves more attention from the Central Government for its speedy economic and infrastructural development.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI SANTH PRIYA GAUTAM): You have got only two minutes. So, please be brief and to the point.

SHRI DRUPAD BORGOHAIN: Sir, I come from that region. I want to press my viewpoint. So, please give me some more time. It is quite heartening that the Centre has been trying to pay attention to the development of this vital sphere. That is why, by an Act of Parliament, the North-Eastern Council had been created in 1971. The North-Eastern Council was formed as an advisory body. In

order to make the North-Eastern Council more effective, a proposal for amending the North-Eastern Council Act, 1971 had been brought to Parliament in 1998. I am happy with the efforts made by the Union Government to make the North-Eastern Council more effective. But, I have a few remarks in regard to the present form of the Bill that has been placed before the Rajya Sabha for adoption.

Sir, I support the inclusion of Sikkim as the eighth State, under the jurisdiction of the scheme. However, the State is not compact and contiguous with any other region. In the first Bill, introduced in the year 1998, the Governors of eight State were not included in the NEC. Now, the hon. Minister wants that Governors should also be included as Members in the NEC. He has sought it through an amendment. I do not think that this is a right move. Chief Ministers are the real representatives of a State, while Governors are the constitutional heads of the States. So, for the real representation of different States in the NEC, the inclusion of Chief Ministers in the NEC is sufficient. A Governor can temporarily be a member when a State is under President's rule. If both, Governors and the Chief Ministers are included in the NEC, there might arise some clashes between them. It would create a constitutional problem. Secondly, the argument for inclusion of Governors' inclusion for security reasons is not correct. I think, the NEC should not be entrusted with the responsibility of security. That is my viewpoint. If security activities are entrusted to the NEC, the main purpose of the development will be diluted, and the effectiveness of the NEC will be diluted. The desired results would not be achieved. So, my humble submission to the hon. Minister is that amendment for Governor's inclusion in the NEC should be withdrawn. Then, it is all right that the hon. President should nominate the three persons.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI SANGH PRIYA GAUTAM): Please finish within one minute. Please finish now, there are many speakers.

SHRI DRUPAD BORGOHAIN: Sir, I belong to the North-Eastern Region, so I should be given some more time

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI SANGH PRIYA GAUTAM): Okay, then, you can continue.

SHRI DRUPAD BORGOHAIN: The President should not only have the right to nominate three persons to the North-Eastern Council, but he should have the right to nominate the Chairman also. This will enable better coordination between the Centre and the States.

Earlier, the North-Eastern Council functioned mainly as an advisory body. It should function not only as a planning body, but it should have a say in the implementation of different projects and schemes also.

Moreover, the North-Eastern Council should not only have the power to plan schemes which are in the interest of two or three States, but it should have a right to plan schemes for individual States also.

Another point is that along with eight Chief Ministers and three Presidential nominees, at least, one Member of each of these States, representing either House of Parliament, should also be nominated to the Council. I think, from Assam, three Members should be nominated because it has the largest representation in the House, that is, 21. Then, the total number of members of the Council would come to around 20.

Lastly, the functioning of the present North-Eastern Council is not up to the mark. The work on many of the projects taken up by the North-Eastern Council is going on at a slow pace. The North-Eastern Council had given funds to improve the Dhodar Ali Road, Assam, in 1989, but till now, the fund has not been fully utilized. So, for proper implementation of decisions, an effective mechanism should be there. With these words, excepting inclusion of Governors and excepting inclusion of representatives of MPs of the region in the North-Eastern Council, I support the Bill.

SHRI MANOJ BHATTACHARYA (West Bengal): Mr. Vice Chairman, Sir, while commenting on this Bill, I am reminded of my own speech made on 27th November, 2001, in this very House, when hon. Shri Arun Shourie was also present. At that time also, I raised the issue of perennial problem of underdevelopment in the North-Eastern States. Sir, the purpose of this Bill is not to pass legislation only. It is intended to effect proper and equitable development in the entire North-Eastern region. Even though I have got full confidence in the competence of Shri Arun Shourie, I doubt whether requisite developments, as desired by us, would ever take place there. After Mr. Shourie took over the responsibility of handling this situation, I expected that, he with his competence, would be able to see to it that development takes palce there. But, I am sorry to comment that no cogniable development is taking place in that region. The problems being confronted by the people of these States have not been taken care of to the extent they should have been. This is the second point.

Thirdly, I want to say that sisters of our country, as a whole, are being highly neglected. Keeping in tune with these unfortunate national ethos of today, that is, neglecting the sisters of our country and committing atrocities on them, in the same way, these seven sister-States are also being treated. Now, one more State has also been added, and the number of States has gone up to eight. Unless the basic attitude towards the sisters is changed, there will be no change in the

existing situation there. Due to the shortage of time, I cannot go on discussing about the existing ground reality in the North-Eastern Region. Even though, there was a Bill in vogue right from 1971 for these perennially weak States, till date, no well-meaning developmental processes have been initiated, or, rather, supervised or implemented. That is why, the situation is so deplorable there. The basic change that is being envisaged, through this Bill, is the exclusion of the Governors from the Council and inclusion of...(*time-bell*). I have not covered even two minutes. I am trying to conclude. The Governors have been excluded, and there is a suggestion to nominated some...(*Interruptions*)

THE MINISTER OF DISINVESTMENT, THE MINISTER OF DEVELOPMENT OF NORTH-EASTERN REGION AND THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI ARUN SHOURIE): That proposal was made in 1998. That has been withdrawn. Now, the proposal is, Governors should continue in the Council.

SHRI MANOJ BHATTACHARYA: Mr. Shourie, one minute. I would like to say that the main resources for development in the North-Eastern States will have to be flown from Delhi to those States.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI SANGH PRIYA GAUTAM): Mr. Bhattacharya, please, one minute. I want to take the sense of the House. Now, it is one o'clock. There are three more speakers. I think, they will finish within fifteen minutes. After that the Minister has to reply. Should we continue with this discussion?

SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE (West Bengal): We should continue so that the Legislative Business is over.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI SANGH PRIYA GAUTAM): Okay. Mr. Bhattacharya, you finish in one minute.

SHRI MANOJ BHATTACHARYA: Sir, I am making my last point. I am just concluding. Governors will have to act as facilitators to the release of funds from Centre to those States. Therefore, unless Governors are there in the Council, the purpose of this Council may be compromised to some extent. Therefore, my suggestion is on two counts. First is regarding the resource mobilisation. Secondly, Mr. Shourie will also agree that a peculiar sort of political instability exists in different North-Eastern States. This is known to each one of us. Then, Governor's rule might be there in some States. For that purpose also, Governors' inclusion in the Council is required. I am convinced that all Governors are not like the present Governors of Uttar Pradesh and Gujarat. The other Governors will be well-meaning Governors, well-oriented Governors, and they will be playing a very positive role in this. Therefore, my

suggestion is that the Governors should be continued to be included in the North-Eastern Council, and Members of Parliament can also be included in this Council, as and when it feels like.

श्री शंकर राय चौधरी (पश्चिमी बंगाल): महोदय, आज जो नॉर्थ-ईस्ट कौंसिल बिल पर चर्चा हो रही है वह मेरे ख्याल से बहुत ओवरड्यू है। मैं चंद बातें इसके बारे में कहना चाहता हूं। सबसे पहले तो नॉर्थ-ईस्ट कौंसिल के बारे में इसमें सिर्फ यह बताया गया है कि यह एक प्लानिंग बॉडी होगी, लेकिन मैं समझता हूं कि नार्थ-ईस्ट हमारे मुल्क का एक ऐसा रिजन है, एक ऐसा टुकड़ा है कि अगर यह सिर्फ प्लानिंग बॉडी रहे तो इसका पूरा महत्व नहीं रहेगा। मैं यह अर्ज करना चाहता हूं कि जो पुराना नॉर्थ-ईस्ट कौंसिल एक्ट था उसमें फंक्शंज ऑफ् द कौंसिल काफी डिटेल में दिए गए हैं। मैं समझता हूं कि यह कौंसिल के फंक्शंज इससे और बहुत ज्यादा फैले हुए होने चाहिए और सिर्फ इसको रिजनल प्लानिंग बॉडी के हिसाब से नहीं देखना चाहिए, क्योंकि प्लानिंग के अलावा इनको बहुत कुछ और भी करना पड़ेगा। इस संदर्भ में मैं यह भी कहना चाहता हूं कि नॉर्थ-ईस्ट के हालात के बारे में हम और आप सब लोगों को पता है कि जो पुराना नार्थ-ईस्ट कौंसिल एक्ट है, जिस पर चर्चा हो रही है, उसके पैराग्रॉफ 6 में यह इन्क्लूड किया था, In order to assist the Council in the discharge of its functions, each of the Ministries of the Central Government, dealing with matters relating to defence, finance, home affairs and planning, shall nominate an officer to attend meetings of the Council. वह तो है। इस कौंसिल का जो सेक्रटेरियल स्टॉफ है पैराग्रॉफ् 7 में, उसमें है, The Council shall have secretarial staff consisting of a Secretary, a Planning Adviser, a Financial Adviser और इस पर जरा गौर किया जाए, ए सैक्योरिटी एडवाइजर, क्योंकि नॉर्थ-ईस्ट के जो हालात हैं, जैसे अरूण शौरी जी और सबको पता है कि इसमें यह जो आस्पैक्ट है, इसके ऊपर अभी तो काफी अर्से तक ध्यान देना चाहिए और जहां तक मेरे को याद है कि एक सैक्योरिटी एडवाइजर नॉर्थ-ईस्ट कौंसिल में हैं। जो अमूमन डायरेक्टर जनरल आसाम रायफल्स होते हैं। लेकिन यह भी अफसोस की बात है कि क्योंकि हरेक स्टेट में अलग-अलग वजह हैं, टैरेरिज्म चल रहा है या इनसर्जेन्सी चल रही है और बगल वाले क्षेत्र से इल्लीगल इमिग्रेशन हो रहा है, इसको संशोधित रूप से एज ए रीजन अगर टैकल न करें तो डवलपमेंट के लिए भले ही हम पैसे देते जाएं लेकिन उस में रुकावट पड़ेगी। इसलिए मेरी अर्ज यह है कि सेक्युरिटी एडवाइजर और काउंसिल के जो फंक्शंस हैं, उनको और खुलासे के साथ इसमें स्पेसिफाई किया जाए। धन्यवाद।

उपसभाध्यक्ष (श्री संघ प्रिय गौतम)-थैंक्यू राय चौधरी साहब। श्री पालदेन छिरिंग ग्याम्छो।

SHRI PALDEN TSERING GYAMTSO (Sikkim): Thank you, for giving me this opportunity to participate in the discussion on the North-Eastern Council (Amendment) Bill, 1998 which seeks to include Sikkim in the Council. The proposal for inclusion of Sikkim in the Council has arisen out of the desire of

the people of Sikkim, which has been expressed in various fora, bodies and meetings because of certain commonalities like ethnicity, social, way of life, food habit, etc., and, to some extent, cultural, and also because of more or less similar problems due to hills, terrains and gorges. The erstwhile Governments in the State had taken up this proposal because of the sentiments of the people behind this move. It was only after our Party, Sikkim Democratic Front, came to power, the proposal picked up its momentum. Our Chief Minister, Shri Pawan Chamling, had called on the Prime Minister, then the Home Minister—now the Deputy Prime Minister—and also the other Central leaders, and impressed upon them the need to include Sikkim in the Council because of the sentiments of the people. The hon. Prime Minister has been very kind enough to understand the emotion and sentiment of the Sikkimese people and, as a result, today we could see this Bill. In fact, it was in 1998, when this Bill was brought in this House and passed by the House, but because of the mid-term polls, the Bill had lapsed. Now, it has again been brought back before this House today. Sir, on behalf of the people of Sikkim, on behalf of my leader, Shri Pawan Chamling, and on my own behalf, I would like to thank the hon. Prime Minister for understanding the emotions and respecting the sentiments of the people of Sikkim, and thus agreeing to our demand. I would now request all the hon. Members to pass this Bill. The hon. Deputy Prime Minister has a very sympathetic and understanding view on Sikkim. I shall place my hope on the fact that he will continue doing so in future also. The hon. Chief Ministers of the North-Eastern States and Members of Parliament have been very supportive. They have welcomed us in their fold. Sir, through you, I must thank them. I do not wish to give my view on the Bill, at this juncture because Sikkim is yet to become a member of the Council. Therefore, I wish to conclude my speech here. But before I do that, I would like to thank the Minister in-charge of the North-Eastern States. It is because of his initiatives that this Bill has again been brought before the House. Thank you, Sir.

SHRI SWARAJ KAUSHAL (Haryana): Mr. Vice-Chairman, Sir, this Bill proposes to exclude Governors from the North-Eastern Council.

SHRI ARUN SHOURIE: Sir, Sir...

SHRI SWARAJ KAUSHAL: No; no, look at the Statement of Objects and Reasons.

SHRI ARUN SHOURIE: Sir, since now it is mentioned, I would like to say that there seems to be some confusion. Manoj Ji was also mentioning that. It is an amendment which was moved in 1998, and, in that the Governors were sought to be excluded. Now, in the proposal that is before you, that provision has been set aside, and the existing provision of the North-Eastern Council Bill is to continue

with the Governors. We do not have 3(a).

SHRI ROBERT KHARSHIING (Meghalaya): Sir, the proposed amendment has not been circulated.

SHRI SWARAJ KAUSHAL: Kindly look at the Statement of Objects and Reasons. Yes, it has come now. It had not yet been distributed.

SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE: When a new Bill is introduced, it goes in the *dak* to the Members within two days. It is the normal practice. You check up your *dak*.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI SANGH PRIYA GAUTAM): It is before me. This amendment had been circulated on 15th November of this year. It finds place in Clause 3 of the proposed amendment. It says:

"The person or persons for the time being holding the office of the Governor of the State..." It is included here. Either it might not have reached you or you might not have read it.

SHRI SWARAJ KAUSHAL: Sir, I was reading the Statement of Objects and Reasons. The emphasis here is on removal. That has been done. Governors have been retained.

[THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN in the Chair]

We find that the Governors have a special responsibility under the Constitution. Especially in the States of Arunachal and Nagaland, they have a special responsibility in terms of finance and law and order.

Also under paragraph 2(bb), the Governors have a special responsibility in respect of the District Councils also.

I am grateful that the hon. Minister has retained the Governors there. But, what has still been excluded is that there are no representatives of the Autonomous District Councils in the North Eastern Council Act.

The District Councils have a very important role to play. There are autonomous districts under the Constitution.

I am sorry to point out that the financial discipline in the District Councils just does not exist. There are practically no books of accounts. I would like to know from the hon. Minister as to when was the last audit of the District Councils carried out. We would be grateful if the hon. Minister could include alongwith the Governors, the Chief Executive Members of the District Councils. After all, who are the people in the District Councils? They are Chakmas, Maras, Lakhers, the Poes, Garos, Jaintias and so on. These are important tribes living in

the border States. We would be grateful if the hon. Minister considers and nominates the Chief Executive Members of the District Councils as members of the North Eastern Council.

Madam, I find that there is no charter of law and order and security in the proposed Bill. We shall be grateful if the North-Eastern Council is made a forum for initiative of peace and dialogue in the North-Eastern Council. After all, these are elected representatives of the North-East. They could counsel the ULFA that the pre-conditions proposed by them are not reasonable. They could impress upon the NSCN not to press certain demands and also could use persuasive methods in respect of other underground groups in the North-East.

Madam, under sub-clause 5 in the proposed Section powers may be delegated to it by the Central Government. If the hon. Minister is not coming forward with an amendment to include the District Councils in the North-Eastern Council Act, what I propose to the hon. Minister is that, at least, the financial discipline and allocation of funds to the District Councils may be delegated to the North-Eastern Council under sub-clause 5.

Madam, I take this opportunity to request the Government of India to initiate a process of peace and dialogue with the underground groups in the North-East. After all, we have seen 55 years of bloodshed. A lot of blood has flowed down the Bramhaputra and the Barak rivers. When I say this, I say, please do not restrict yourselves only to a formal call or announcement. You need to take an initiative at the humane level in more definite and concrete terms.

SHRI C. APOK JAMIR (Nagaland): Thank you, Madam. While supporting this North-East Council Bill, I would also like to put forth my viewpoint also in this regard. Firstly, Madam, we need to know the concept of North-East Council Bill. We should understand the reason for which this Council has been formed. Well, in the early sixties, the Government of India had created small hill States in North-East region and it was basically to accommodate the political aspirations and urges of the tribal people. It was also known that they were not capable of developing themselves and it was also known that it was not an economically viable area in the first place. So, I think, looking at the point of view from the economic angle, it was very pertinent that we had an agency, which would see to the all-round development of the North-East region. We are well aware that the North-East Council was set up in 1972 following the enactment of the North Eastern Council Act of 1971. At the same time, even the North-East Area (Reorganisation) Act of 1971 also came to vogue, when Mizoram, Meghalaya

and Arunachal Pradesh were carved out of Assam and Manipur and Tripura, which were Union Territories, were also made full-fledged States through this Act. Madam, in the initial stage, we are well aware, there was only one Governor. Therefore, there was no problem as far as the chairmanship was concerned. But today, with the existence of seven plus one, eight, Governors, the problem arises of, who is going to be the Chairman. That was the problem. Now, was it going to be in the line of seniority or what were the criteria to have the chairmanship? Secondly, past experiences have shown that whatever proposals the Governors had put forward in the Council itself was a duplication of what the Chief Ministers had put forward. Well, I agree to the fact and I also, in fact, appreciate the sentiments of the hon. Minister when he says that the Governors in the North-East have a peculiar role to play, a special role to play. Well, they have special powers, especially as far as Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh are concerned. But, if you go into the practicality of it, we find that the discretionary powers were never used. In fact, this was brought into vogue during that particular time when it was necessitated. For today, I do not think, this is necessary at all. The past NEC functioning also has reflected that Governor's role actually does not really make a difference because whatever plans have been made have been done at the State planning level. Therefore, Government really does not have any role to play in this. Therefore, whatever the proposals, which were made by the Chief Ministers after a consensus, I think, that should also be taking into consideration. Let me just spell out what the Chief Ministers have come into agreement. Firstly, it was felt that the Governor, as the Constitutional Head of the State, should not be a member of the Council. Secondly, the Chairman of North-East Council should be the Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission. Thirdly, it was agreed that there should be scope to co-opt members from National and International financial institutions and other walks of life. Fourthly, the funds of the North-East Council should not be carved out of the 30 per cent earmarked for special category States as this erodes the already scarce resources of the North-Eastern region States. There are also other States outside the North-Eastern region, under the special category. In view of this, funds of the NEC should be additional to the amount earmarked for the special-category States. Now, the NEC should have power to sanction schemes, once approved by the Council. The scope of the scheme of the NEC should be expanded to include major schemes of major economic importance to the individual States, in addition to the scheme of regional character. The NEC should shed its role of reviewing the security-related matters, and concentrate on economic development. Now, through you, Madam, I would like to inform the House that this consensus has come about not by mere one meeting, but by a continuous course of deliberations on the issues, and what practical difficulties have come about during the

functioning of the NEC. Therefore, I appreciate that there is this logical reasoning that the Governor should be accommodated in the North East Council. But, past experiences have shown practical difficulties in having them in the Council. Even the first speaker rightly mentioned when he has said that the Governor, by protocol, is the one who takes most of the time, and if you are having eight Governors, they take most of the time, and then, the Chief Ministers come. So, we do not get enough time to tackle the real problems, which we are to discuss, and therefore, I urge upon the hon. Minister to consider this point.

Another aspect, which I would like to emphasise, is that a Member of Parliament of the respective States should also be a member of this Council. We feel that having an M.P. in this Council will also enhance the developmental activities in this area, and I am sure, that they will also be a plus point in creating that transparency which is very much lacking in the past NEC functioning.

Madam, another aspect, which they have brought about, is the Autonomous District Council. Yes, it is true that the Autonomous District Council should be well represented, and we also feel that the Chief Executive Member should also be a member of this council. But, then again, we should not club it with the Governor. In fact, if you see the past experiences of the functioning of the NEC, the Governor does not really have any role in the developmental aspect. It is the State Government, which is totally involved in it. Therefore, on the point that the Governors are having special dispensation, and they need to be a part and parcel of this Council, logically, this argument may be correct, but practically, I do not think that is very advisable. I therefore request the hon. Minister that in order to have accelerated development in the area, the lacunae which have been reflected by the Chief Ministers in the past, should also be taken into consideration, because, these are not mere recommendations from them or consensus from them, but they have been arrived at after a thorough deliberation on the pros and cons of the functioning of the NEC. Furthermore, I would also like to make my personal observations. Today, the functioning of the NEC is reduced to the process of just haggling for projects and funds. The advisory nature of the Council has receded to the background, and this has arisen for a few reasons: (a) The nature and manner in which the advice is to be given and to whom such advices are to be given, at the Centre, or the concerned Ministry, is not clearly defined.

(b) The powers given to the NEC to sanction projects has, in fact, overshadowed all its functioning.

(c) It is seen that the manpower available with the NEC today is really pitiable. There are really no persons around to give professional or qualified advice. The

Secretariat is manned mainly by deputationists from the State Governments, or, at times, from the BRO. No doubt, they are sincere and hardworking, but they lack the necessary skills to guide the NEC for the development of the region. The context of development is further viewed in schematic terms. This is the real area that needs to be changed for the NEC to be effective. In the earlier discussions, the Chief Ministers had recommended the inclusion of some economist and industrialist as members in the NEC. In view of the present process of liberalisation, it would be worthwhile to even think in terms of including the ICC and the CII in the NEC. This would go a long way in inducing private investment in the region. Some mechanism also has to be evolved to attract the right kind of people to work in the NEC Secretariat.

SHRI FALI S. NARIMAN (Nominated): I only wish to take a minute or two of this extended time, to compliment our dynamic Minister, on this amending Bill. The North-Eastern States are of strategic importance, both geographically and emotionally, more importantly, emotionally, and they are the most neglected. And that is why, I have successively asked Law Ministers in the past, that when there is a Bench of the Supreme Court in the South which will come, hopefully in a very short while, we should also have a Bench in the Eastern region, in order to show the emotional integration of this part of the country with the rest of the country. Of course, they are a part of India, they will always remain a part of India, but, emotionally we have to show that they are integrated. But I also wish to mention to the hon'ble Minister that there is one very important provision, which he has not removed, and advisedly not removed, and I would particularly draw attention to this. It says, in 3(2), "notwithstanding anything contained, the President may, if he deems it necessary, nominate a Union Minister to be a Member of the Council." Now, I would recommend to the hon'ble Minister that it should be ensured that the Union Minister is always a member of the Council of Ministers and the Government is giving to the North-Eastern States, and the group of the North-Eastern States, which were the constellation of seven sisters, and now, are the Eight Sisters. And they are a very important geographical part of this country, and, that would also solve, incidentally, the problem of chairmanship, who will be the Chairman, very probably, the Union Minister himself would be the Chairman, in a group of States. The question, whether the Governor should be the Chairman, or the Chief Minister should be the Chairman, would be resolved immediately, but importantly—I am not so bothered about who becomes the Chairman—but that the Union Minister is there—and there are many Union Ministers including the Minister who has piloted this Bill, who has a great concern for the North-Eastern States. And, I think you should show the concern that you have for the North-Eastern States, by requesting the President to nominate a Union Minister always to this North-

Eastern Council of States.

SHRI DWIJENDRA NATH SHARMAH (Assam): Madam, I thank you for allowing me to speak on the North-Eastern Council (Amendment) Bill, 1998. First of all, I welcome the decision of including Sikkim as one of the members of the North-Eastern Council. Originally, there were seven States. Now, Sikkim has also been included.

The Act was originally, enacted in 1971. Three decades have passed after the enactment of the Act. After the constitution of the North-Eastern Council, the people of the North-Eastern region have observed what they have got from the North-Eastern Council in these three decades. Now, the Act is to be amended. Most of the Members have raised the point of inclusion or the exclusion of Governors. In this connection, I would like to mention that the Bill was also sent to the Standing Committee. Most of the Governments of the North-Eastern States have given their opinion. I have noted that, particularly, the State Governments of Nagaland, Assam and Manipur, have recommended that the Governors should not continue to work as members of the North-Eastern Council. My colleague has also raised the issue. In my opinion, only the Chief Ministers of the States who are conversant with the problems and affairs of the North-Eastern region, who are more concerned about the problems of the people, who have more knowledge and expertise about the governance of the region, should be there. I think, the inlcusion of Governors in the North-Eastern Council will not be proper. Rather, the inclusion of Chief Ministers will be much more effective for the development of the region. They will be able to ventilate the grievances of the people of all the States in the North-Eastern Council in a much better way Madam, I have noted that most of the State Governments have expressed this type of opinion. I also oppose the inclusion of Governors in the North-Eastern Council.

Madam, there is a provision for nomination of three members to the Council by the President. We have no objection to the nomination of members to the Council, but these three members should be persons who have got sufficient knowledge about the North-Eastern region, who have got newer ideas for the development of the North-Eastern region. Only experts should be nominated to the Council.

Madam, it has been mentioned that the North-Eastern Council will function as regional planning body. Here, I would like to draw the attention of the hon. Minister in charge of the North-Eastern States to the fact that in some states of the North Eastern Region, mostly, the tribal people live in these States. They are having rich heritage in culture, cottage industries, handicrafts

and handlooms. They are not included. They are living there and without getting any support from the Government of India and other sources, they are continuing their heritage. I would like to urge upon the hon. Minister to ensure that at the time of planning, the heritage of the tribal people of the North-Eastern Region is protected.

Another point I would like to raise is that, it is not clear as to who will be the Chairman of the Council. Previously, the Governors were Chairman by rotation. Now, to avoid the duplicity of work, because still it is a planning body, we will prefer either the Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission or the Minister in charge of North-Eastern Region as the Chairman.

Madam, there is another strong demand raised by most of our Members. They have suggested that MPs from the North-Eastern Region should be included in the Council. It is in the sense that as representatives of the North-Eastern Region, they are very much concerned, and they have much better contact with the local people. In my opinion, if MPs from the region are made members of the North-Eastern Council, they would be able to ventilate the grievances of different sections of people in the Council so that the council can undertake effective planning. So, I think some MPs from the region should be nominated to the Council. I would suggest that 8 MPs—5 from Lok Sabha and 3 from Rajya Sabha—should be nominated, so that they can raise the problems of different sections of the people in the Council.

Another point which I would like to raise is that, 95% of the border in the North-Eastern Region is international border. Earlier, there used to be border trade with Myanmar, Bangladesh and some other countries. I hope this aspect will also be looked into by the hon. Minister at the time of planning. Madam, I don't want to take more time of the House, and with these observations, I support the Bill. Thank you.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN : Shri Robert Kharshiing.

SHRI ROBERT KHARSHIING : Thank you, Madam.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN : Be brief, because everybody has spoken.

SHRI ROBERT KHARSHIING : Madam, I rise to support this Amendment, and the efforts of the Minister for Development of North-Eastern Region. I also welcome our new colleague Sikkim to the North-Eastern Council. They are a welcome addition. Madam, yesterday, there was a meeting of the North-East MPs Forum, and, cutting across party lines, we arrived at certain unanimous suggestions. One was : In a constructive spirit, we opposed the

continued inclusion of Governors. A few reasons were also given in this regard. One was that, one person, who had earlier been a Governor, mentioned that in his 5 years of office, he never had to handle District Councils, (fd. by 2j) TMV/2J-1/1.40.

This argument that Autonomous District Councils are handled by the Governors is not altogether correct.

The second objection that was raised was that when the Governors speak—there are eight Governors and, as per the protocol, the Governors will speak before the Chief Ministers—assuming that each of them would take half-an-hour, there wouldn't be any time left for the Chief Ministers, who are the direct representatives of the people. They would not be able to say whatever they want to say because the Governors would have already taken much of the time.

The third argument, which was raised by the ex-Chief Minister of Manipur, who is sitting here, Shri Rishang Keishiing, was that when he was the Chief Minister—he was the Chief Minister of Manipur on several occasions—the security issue was never taken up in the deliberations of the North-Eastern Council. The deliberations were always regarding developing and planning. In the light of these three arguments, in our view, the continuation of the Governors in the North-Eastern Council is not exactly correct. So, yesterday, we had unanimously suggested, cutting across party lines, that the Governors should not be included in the North-Eastern Council.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Can a former Governor, who is a member of Parliament, be included?

SHRI ROBERT KHARSHIING: Yes, Medam.

Secondly, we suggested that one MP from each State should be included as Member in the North-Eastern Council. The reason is that the NEC is answerable to Parliament only. No matter relating to the NEC, whether any Bill or amendments, comes before the State Assemblies. They always come before the Parliament. Therefore, it is very apt, if one MP from each state is included in the NEC.

The third suggestion which we made was this. We support the inclusion of three members, to be nominated by the President. But, here, we would like the word "eminent" to be added. The three nominees should be eminent people. The reason is that, today, this Government is there. Tomorrow, there may be another Government. We do not want purely political people to come into this Council, through the recommendation of the President. So, the three persons nominated by the President should be men and women of eminence.

Another unanimous suggestion which made was that the Minister in charge of the North-Eastern Region should be the Chairman of the North-Eastern Council. This was our suggestion yesterday. I appreciate the suggestion made by my esteemed and hon. colleague, Shri Fali Nariman, that one Minister should always be present, as a Member, in the North-Eastern Council. I feel this would reflect the importance being attached to the North-Eastern Council by the Centre.

The last point which I want to raise is this. In the meeting yesterday, one senior Member mentioned that we should also emphasise the need for transparency and proper appropriation of funds, and we cutting across party lines, agreed to that. There is a perception in the rest of the country that we are not property utilising the funds in the North-Eastern Region. At least, as far as the North-Eastern Council is concerned—I think all my colleagues from the North-Eastern Region will agree with me—if you compare any State Department with the North-Eastern Council, people prefer the North-Eastern Council projects. They feel, at least, the things will be managed properly. In the case of State Departments, it becomes very difficult.

There was one more thing we decided yesterday. That is, the North-Eastern council should be given executive powers, because the funds are routed through the NEC, but the projects are implemented by the State Departments. Sometimes, the State Departments divert the funds. Therefore, the NEC should be given executive powers. It would ensure the proper utilisation of the funds. Thank you.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Now, I have another request from the Mizo National Front Member, Shri Lalhmingliana. Shri Lalhmingliana, if you are going to add anything new, you can do so.

SHRI SWARAJ KAUSHAL: It is his maiden speech.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Then , we will cut into the time allocated to the Private Member's business. Shri Lalhmingliana, if you have got some new points, you can make those points. If there is nothing, it is okay.

SHRI LALHMINGLIANA (Mizoram): While welcoming this Bill, I would like to support the observations put forward by my colleagues from the North East who have spoken already. I also support the exclusion of Governors from the Council and inclusion of the Members of Parliament, one from each State. Apart from that, I would like to raise a point regarding the Chairmanship. Some of my friends and my colleagues from the North-East suggested that the Minister of Development of North-Eastern Region (DONER) be the Chairman of the Council. Some others have suggested that the Vice-

Chairman of the Planning Commission may be the Chairman. This morning I talked to my Chief Minister. He is very firm with the observations, already submitted to the hon. Minister and to the hon. Prime Minister that the Vice-Chairman of the Planning Commission be the Chairman of the Council. I also support that, because if the Minister of Development of North Eastern Region is the Chairman of the North Eastern Council as he is not looking after only the DONER and he is very busy looking after all the other departments under him which are very big and controversial. He would not be having much time to look after the North Eastern Council for the development of the north-east. So, I suggest that the Vice Chairman of the Planning Commission be the Chairman of the NEC.

Regarding nomination by the President, I would like to suggest, Madam, that those nominated members by the President be specialized persons, having a good experience in planning and looking after overall development of the country and not from the political circle itself. Let there be specialised persons from at least some peripherals. So, with that observation, I would like to conclude saying that while the Bill is welcome, the views of the Chief Ministers of the North East and the views of the Members of Parliament from the North East should be taken into consideration by the hon. Minister of DONER. Thank you.

SHRI ARUN SHOURIE : Madam, as I mentioned the other day, this Bill has been talked of for almost six-seven years and amendments were first introduced in 1998 and then the Government, after deep consultations with many persons including Chief Ministers and the Governors had to revise its views and, therefore, the second set of amendments has come.

Madam, a number of very important points have been made which deal with development, within development, on allocations, on protecting the heritage of tribals and on how we should incorporate or involve the North Eastern Council in the peace dialogue. I will first deal with points that deal with North Eastern Council Bill. Five points have been made and I will deal with them. And then, if you will permit, I will come to other points, which are very important points, regarding the development of the region, regarding the emotional integration of the region with the rest of the country but if you permit I will first come to the question of the North Eastern Council Bill. In the last three months, we have personally visited 70 projects on the ground precisely because as Shri Swaraj Kaushal has said, allocations are made, but, then they are not followed up by implementation. Seventy projects have been visited physically. The tour reports of my colleagues are the most

educative one. I have made it a practice to send them to the Chief Ministers and the Chief Secretaries. We are now trying to put them on the Website also so that everybody in the North-East and eveywhere else, including the hon. Members who are concerned with the development of the North-East can know what we have seen on the ground. I am trying my best, in the face of determined resistance from the Government, to see that the names of contractors who have been given individual works are also be put on our Website, I am trying my best to do that. We are starting in this case with all projects being financed by the North-Eastern Council so that the people could know about it. You have rightly said that the North Eastern Council was not working properly. I have no hesitation in admitting this fact. I would like to tell you one more thing. We gave presentations to the Chief Ministers and also to the Secretariat of the North-Eastern Council.

Madam, a road of 25 kilometres was to be constructed in Arunachal Pradesh. Can the hon. Members guess among how many contractors that work was divided? This work was given to 1,200 contractors. In the case of another road of 20 kilometers, 30 to 40 contractors were given the work; one contractor would bring sand, the other contractor would bring water and so on. Therefore, the work was not getting done. The fact of the matter is, the Secretary of the North-Eastern Council had to be proceeded against on corruption charges and he was suspended for that reason. That case is still going on. By the determined efforts of the Chief Ministers, of the Governors, of the Central Government, of the C&AG, a great effort has been made to revise the working of the North Eastern Council. I am sure, whenever there is an occasion for considering the important points that have been made regarding the development of the North-East, we will be able to report to you the progress that has been made in this regard, So far as transparency is concerned, I am fully with you. We are putting out this information. I invite all of you to visit that site to supplement. For instance, on the Prime Minister's Website, every month, a report is put out on these 28 projects. It is a thick report. I send it to every Chief Minister, to every Chief Secretary of the Government there, to every editor of important newspapers and publications there, so that they can also follow it up. I am inviting all the MPs. I have invited them in the meetings which we have had. I would request you to visit those projects and tell us whether the information which the Government is getting which we are putting out, is correct or not. Please help us in this common endeavour.

Madem, I would start with the questions that have been raised in regard to the North-Eastern Council.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN : Mr. Minister, I would like to know one thing. Do you have a Website?

SHRI ARUN SHOURIE : Yes, Madem.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN : Is it an interactive Website where the Members can put their suggestions ?

SHRI ARUN SHOURIE : Yes, Madem, They can certainly put questions. My colleagues will tell you about it. Madem, we are very happy that a large number of questions are being put to us ; we provide questions as well as answers on the Website. We also try to contact the people on E-mail who are taking interest in this matter.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN : That is a good thing. We should make use of the modern technology to bridge the gap of distance and backwardness.

SHRI ARUN SHOURIE : There is another important point. For instance, in the North-East, people had a great grievance that they were not able to use the modern technology. As you know, madam, earliei cellular phones were not allowed there because there were many objections from security point of view and due to some other reasons. They were overcome. As Shri Pramod Mahajan had announced, that service is now being extended all over the North-East.Similarly, in every Block Headquarters—there are 350 Block Headquarters —Computer Centres and Information Centres are being set up so that every block could be linked with each other all over the North-East. We will put in that information also about specific development projects that have been executed. The Members are completely right that unless citizens know what money is coming to their area for which project, actually, money will just get diverted elsewhere and so on. Madam, five points have been made in this. One is that the Governors should be excluded; several Members have mentioned. That, M. P.'s should be included; several Members have mentioned. In that, Swaraj Ji has mentioned that Chief Executive Members of Autonomous Councils should be included. There are divergent views about what Swaraj Ji said. He said that security should be a very important emphasis of the North-Eastern Council and other Members like Mr. Borgohain said that security should be removed because otherwise, that development gets obscured by security. Mr. Kharshiing has been quoting that in none of their meetings, which he atttended by security ever considered...(*Interruptions*). I agree, that in what Mr. Robert was quoting from the observation I am just mentioning it. Then, Mr. Borgohain said that in addition to regional projects, State-specific projects should also be taken up with the North-Eastern Council. I will come to each of these points, Madam, But, the basic point

was made by Mr. Jamir that as to the nature, the purpose for which the Council was set up, how does Government conceive that; how does this Bill further that purpose and that also answers this point about State-specific projects. See State-specific projects have been taken up by State plans, by Centre executing projects in those States under the Border Area Development Programme and under the Hill Area Development Programme. All those are State-specific projects. The Council was meant to look at the region as a whole. And, if you will permit, Madam, it is a great joy for me to read for you, Madam, the observations of Mrs. Gandhi when this Council was set up and the first meeting, that she addressed in inaugurating this Council that remains the purpose of this Council and we should jointly endeavour to realise that purpose. She said while addressing the assembled Members, "The primary purpose of this Council is the development of the region for greater human welfare. The first principle of development is co-ordinated activity." And,she said that today even the sovereign States are co-operating for development and other purposes and here we are having a large number of States, many of them in varying sizes, some very small, some so small that you will not be able to have projects only limited to that if you want economically viable projects and, therefore, the need for co-ordinated activity and to formulate a co-ordinated plan for development and welfare of the region as a whole. She said, "I share the hope expressed by the Governor, Shri B. K. Nehru"—who was, in many ways, the architect of the Council —"that the Council will gradually grow into an effective, co-ordinating agency for solving of regional problems in an atmosphere of goodwill, responsibility and mutual respect." She continued, "I like the Council to draw up projects which will benefit more than one unit, and which can be implemented or, at least, started within the remaining period of that particular Plan, that is, the Fourth Five-Year Plan. There are sectors such as transport and communications, power, marketing, institutional financing, training, preparation of feasibility studies for industries. etc., in which a regional approach would be most welcome." Madam, she supplemented this after she inaugurated this Council, she wrote to the Ministerial colleagues, at that time, and said, "I inaugurated the North-Eastern Council in November, 1972, and the variety of reasons why this was set up, the object of the Council was to ensure that the existence of a number of political units in the North-East of India does not affect its economic development, that their rapid economic integration is facilitated and the problems of the region are dealt with as an integrated whole." This has continued to be, it should be, our prospective. Recently, Madam, as you know, the President, after his installation in Office, has been there, I think, thrice. This is because of his keen interest in the region and he has also said

that we should work towards making the North-East one economic region and one security zone. Unless that kind of approach is there, if we get derailed in State-specific projects, or what is just now said about haggling over individual projects, if the North-Eastern Council itself becomes a forum for haggling, and I shall show you how some of the proposals you are putting forward will make it that kind of a forum. We would really be defeating its very purpose.

2.00 P.M.

Madam, on the questions of Governors, it is true; there are differences of opinion. We have an ex-Governor from the region. He had a very important part to play in the initiation of peace dialogue, and he continues to be involved in these matters. His perception, from personal knowledge, is that their presence is required for this. I will tell you why it is so. Not with standing what my friend, Mr. Robert, was saying, one Governor has written, saying that he did not ever look at the Autonomous Council. But the fact of the matter is that, he should have been looking at it. Just because there is one school which is not performing its duties well, you don't abolish education.

Madam, in this case, the first point is that, under the Sixth Schedule, the Governors of the North-East are different, in many ways, from the Governors of the rest of India. They have the constitutional role in regard to the Sixth Schedule as well. In Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Tripura, where there are these Autonomous Councils,—there are nine Autonomous Councils, under the Schedule, and ten more, under the individual Acts of the States—in respect of the Governors who are not attending to them, our method should be positive; we should ask, "Why are you not attending to your constitutional duty ?" That is not all. In Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh, under article 371 (a) and (h) of the Constitution, the Governors of these two States have special responsibilities on law and order itself.

Madam, Shri Shankar Roy Chowdhury, with all his experience of handling the North-East and other regions of the country, has emphasised the actual situation in regard to security. It is a fact that successive Governments of India have laid special emphasis on selecting Governors for the North-East. In other places, ordinary persons or, may be, even political appointees are put, but if you scan the roll of the Governors who have been selected for the North-East, they are, more often, persons who had special background in national security affairs. For that reason also, their continuance is important. To say that they don't have a role in development, as my dear friend, Mr. Jamir, was saying—I don't share that view, now that I am interacting with

them as well as the Chief Ministers. I can tell him about the Governor of Assam; of course, I am not excluding the other Governors. Dr. Manmohan Saheb is here. He knows that in the last few years because of several programmes, Assam has risen from a rice-deficit State to a rice-surplus State. One of the major things that have helped in that is the Two Lakh Tubewell Scheme that really came forth because of the initiative of the Governor there, and the co-operation of successive Chief Ministers, especially the present Chief Minister. Similarly, the Govenor of Mizoram, the extent of interest that he is taking; he and Mr. Zoramthanga are working together in various types of innovative projects, which serve as a model for the rest of the country. That should be encouraged.

Madam, there is also one thing that needs to be considered, and this was mentioned by a hon. Member. In the North-East—in some States, not in all the States—there are revolving Governors. Sometimes, we have three to four Chief Ministers in a small period and that becomes a problem. In such cases, the Governors provide the continuity.

Now, the next question that was raised was about...(*Interruptions*)

श्री मूल चन्द मीणा (राजस्थान) : बस, हो गया, मैडम।

श्री अरुण शौरी : जैसे आप कहें। Madam, if you want me to respond to the other points, I can do that. Or, if you want that we should all endorse the Bill now, I agree.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN : If you are satisfied that you have satisfied the Members...

SHRI ARUN SHOURIE : That is for them to judge. I have, with, with me, various other points which they have made...(*Interruptions*)

SHRI SANGH PRIYA GAUTAM (Uttaranchal) : Let us pass the Bill now.

SHRI ARUN SHOURIE : I take it that everybody has agreed with the approach of the Government, and I will bear in mind....

SHRI SWARAJ KAUSHAL : I just want to know two things. Why have you dropped security and law and order from the Charter of the North-Eastern Council ? And, why cannot the North-Eastern Council monitor the funds allotted to the District Councils ? Can the District Councils have a representation and guidance from the North-East Council ? Just two parts.

SHRI ARUN SHOURIE : I will deal with only these two points, Madam.

First, on the question of security. That has not been dropped. That amendment had been dropped, but it is now to be included. It is included. I am very happy to report to you, Madam; I have endeavoured that the Home Minister, the External Affairs Minister and the Defence Minister should find time to brief all Governors and all the Chief Ministers on security matters, and we will be scheduling meetings in this regard. The Chief Ministers themselves have now been taking a very strong position that the North-Eastern Council must discuss security affairs. In the last meeting they had on the 14th of November, this was one of their main suggestions that security matters should be taken up so that there would be one security zone. So, that will be included. On the question of the District Councils and their funds, Madam, there are two very good suggestions that have been made. It is a complaint of the Council that the States divert the funds. We have had such complaints from other areas also, for example, the Bodos made this complaint and this idea of giving the funds to the State Governments, in the first instance, but, ensuring that it becomes non-lapsable, if it is not used in the Council, it is something that I will certainly consider. It is not germaine to the Bill. But I will definitely consider it and also talk to the Chief Ministers in that regard.

SHRI C. APOK JAMIR: What about the Council getting executive powers for proper implementation and so on? (*Interruptions*)

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: You read the amendments. It is included.

Now, I put the question to vote. The question is :—

"That the Bill further to amend the North-Eastern Council Act, 1971, be taken into consideration."

The motion was adopted.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: We shall now take the clause-by-clause consideration of the Bill.

Clause 2 was added to the Bill

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: We now take up clause 3. There is one amendment, Amendment No. 3 by Shri Arun Shourie.

SHRI ARUN SHOURIE: Madam, I move :—

13. That at page 2, lines 4—13, the following be *substituted*, namely—

"3. In section 3 of the principal act,—

(a) for sub-section (1), the following sub-section shall be substituted

namely :—

"(1) There shall be a Council to be called the North-Eastern Council which shall consist of the following members, namely :—

(i) the person or persons for the time being holding the office of the Governor of the States;

(ii) the Chief Ministers of the States of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura;

Provided that if there is no Council of Ministers in any State referred to in clause (b), the President may nominate not more than one person to represent such State in the Council for so long as there is no council of Ministers in such State.

(iii) three members to be nominated by the President."

(b) for sub-section (3), the following sub-section shall be substituted, namely :—

"(3) The President shall nominate the Chairman of the Council."

The question was put and the motion was adopted. Clause 3, as amended, was added to the Bill.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: We now take up clause 4. There is one amendment, Amendment No. 4 by Shri Arun Shourie.

SHRI ARUN SHOURIE: Madam, I move:—

4. That at page 2, lines 25–29, be ***deleted.***

The question was put and the motion was adopted. Clause 4, as amended, was added to the Bill.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: We now take up insertion of new clauses 5 and 6. Shri Arun Shouri.

SHRI ARUN SHOURIE: Madam, I move:—

5. That at page 2, after line 33, the following new clauses be *inserted*, namely:—

Amendment "5. In section 5 of the Principal Act, in sub-section

of section 5 (1) for the words "The Council shall meet at such times", the words "The Council shall meet at least twice in a year at such times shall be *substituted.*

Amendment of section 6. 6. In section 6 of the Principal Act, for the words of "and planning" the words "planning and the Department of Development of North-Eastern Region" shall be *substituted.*

The question was put and the motion was adopted.

New Clauses 5 & 6 were added to the Bill

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: We now take up clause 1. There is one amendment, Amendment No. 2 by Shri Arun Shouri.

SHRI ARUN SHOURIE: Madam, I move:-

2. That at page 1, line 3, *for* the figure "1998" the figure "2002" be *substituted.*

The question was put and the motion was adopted.

Clause 1, *as amended was added to the Bill.*

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: We now take up the Enacting Formula. There is one amendment, by Shri Arun Shourt.

SHRI ARUN SHOURIE: Madam, I move:-

14. That at page 1, line 1, *for* the words "Forty-ninth" the words "Fifty-third" be *substituted.*

The question was put and the motion was adopted.

The Enacting Formula, as amended, was added to the Bill.

The Title was added to the Bill.

SHRI ARUN SHOURIE: Madam, I move:-

That the Bill, as amended, be passed.

The question was put and the motion was adopted.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Hon. Members, I want to make one announcement. We are adjourning the House for lunch, for one hour. Since

we will be meeting now at 3.10 p.m., accordingly, the Private Members business will be up to 5.40 p.m.

The House is adjourned for lunch for one hour.

The House then adjourned for lunch at twelve minutes past two of the clock.

The House re-assembled after lunch at sixteen minutes past three of the clock.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI SANGH PRIYA GAUTAM) in the Chair.

PRIVATE MEMBER'S RESOLUTION
DISINVESTMENT POLICY OF THE GOVERNMENT

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI SANGH PRIYA GAUTAM) : Hon. Members, we now take up Private Members' Business. But I have a point to make. The Resolution to be moved by Shri Raghavan pertains to disinvestment. Yesterday, the Business Advisory Committee had decided to take up this very issue for discussion, at length, as a Short Duration Discussion, in the coming week. So, I think, it would be a repetition. Can I make an appeal to the hon. Member, Shri Raghavan, to give up moving his Resolution, and allow his party colleague, Shri Jibon Roy, to move his Resolution?

SHRI V.V. RAGHAVAN (Kerala) : With due respect to you, Sir, in Private Members' Business, it is the right of the Member to move his Resolution, I stick to this right.

SHRI JIBIN ROY (West Bengal) : Sir, myself and Shri Raghavan don't belong to the same party. He is from the CPI, and I am from the CPI(M). (*Interruptions*)

SHRI NILOTPAL BASU (West Bengal) : Mr. Vice-Chairman, Sir, may say a few words? Sir, I agree with Mr. Raghavan; it is the right of an individual Member, and, on this issue, I think, once it is listed, we can't, possibly, take the sense of the House. Therefore, it is better to leave it to his choice.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI SANGH PRIYA GAUTAM) : I am not challenging the right of the Member. You see, there are many issues of public importance, pending discussion. (*Interruptions*) We have been discussing many important issues of public importance in this House and, yet, there remain many other issues of public, importance. But the time left is very short. Therefore, I was making an appeal, from that point of view. I am not asking the Member to give up his right of speaking. He has the right.